

City of Rockville Commission on the Environment
January 13, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Faith Klareich (FK), Seth Adams (SA), Michelle Clark (MC) – via phone, David Davis (DD), Kris Dighe (KD), Beri Kravitz (BK) and Tolulope Odunlami (TO).

Absent: Steve Cardon (SC).

Also in attendance: Staff Liaison Nate Wall (NW); JoAnn Grbach (JG) – City of Rockville Public Information Office; Dominique Lorang – Rockville resident and applicant for Commission vacancy; and Dunstan Macauley –member of HPB working group.

1. Welcome, News and Agenda Review

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm in the Diamondback Terrapin Room at Rockville City Hall.

FK announced that there was the possibility that the Commission may enter into closed session to discuss the Commission vacancy near the end of the meeting.

FK welcomed JG to the Commission meeting.

2. The City's Public Information Office

JG gave a brief background, mentioning that she comes to the City with over 15 years of newspaper experience. Her goals are to effectively use technology, including a larger web/media presence. The City recently reorganized its communications into a Communications Division, which includes the Public Information Office (in charge of press releases, Rockville Reports, internal employee newsletter, and most flyers and brochures released by the City), the Graphics & Printing Division, the Rockville Channel 11, and the website development team.

Every month in Rockville Reports now has an “environmental” section – this is not just what the City is doing, but tips for that residents can use. Also, there is an “environmental email list” and a new City e-newsletter and additional means to get out information. JG said that the PIO would like to help the Environment Commission getting information out, marketing itself, etc.

FK brought up the example of a table-top display – a “road show” exhibit. The Commission would like to have a three-panel display to bring to things like Science Day, or other similar events like Hometown Holidays, even community meetings if invited. JG agreed that was a good idea, and said she would look in to how to get those types of EC outreach projects funded and created. JG also recommended that the Commission coordinate with Neighborhood Resources and with Rec & Parks summer camps and similar programs.

KD asked how the EC might get more involved in the content of the monthly “green page” in Rockville Reports. JG said the RR comes out monthly, and that she would love EC input. She would need information by the first of the month for inclusion into the following month's issue (e.g., by Feb. 1st for the March issue). The e-newsletter goes out each Thursday, so she would need information by noon on Wednesday for that options. In terms of web content – this is an ever present need. There is information there now, but it could certainly be augmented. The Environment features prominently into Mayor & Council vision and goals, so that should be reflected in a prominent online presence.

BK asked for further clarification on the parameters of the e-newsletter. JG said that right now, it is mainly event-driven. To sign up to receive it, go to the “You've Got Rockville Email” from the homepage and select the Events newsletter. It is OK to put related information in it, but it needs to have a Rockville spin.

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JG also mentioned that the City of Rockville has a Facebook page, which is updated ~ daily. An improved website would be unveiled soon as well.

FK asked about information for small business – it seems that most of this information is directed towards the residents rather than Rockville small businesses, which make up a large chunk of Rockville businesses. JG said that hadn't been a focus in the past, but agreed as to its importance.

DD asked about the ability to have a traditional listserv, rather than the e-newsletter, which has a weekly delay. JG is open to the possibility, but is uncertain of how it would be monitored for appropriate content. The EC expressed their interest in having access to an immediate form of mass communication – as an example, if a stream cleanup is to occur “Rain or Shine”, but a massive storm hits, there should be a way of sending out a cancellation notice quickly.

FK suggested the possibility of a quarterly PIO conference call, to discuss environmental outreach activities in the upcoming months.

All working groups are to get website, listserv, and other suggestions to DD for completion.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

KD moves to approve December 9th meeting minutes; DD seconds. Unanimous approval of December 9th meeting minutes.

4. Anti-Graffiti Ordinance Update

KD went over the newest version of the explanatory document on the need and structure of an Anti-Graffiti Ordinance in Rockville, followed by discussion. This will be presented at the Rec & Parks Advisory Board's February meeting on Feb. 26th at 7pm. Location is TBD.

DD moves that the current draft document be provided to the Rec & Parks Advisory Board for review and discussion. SA seconds the motion. Unanimous decision to provide the draft document to the Rec & Parks Advisory Board.

FK mentioned that after the Feb. 26th meeting, the EC attendees would report back in March for Next Steps.

5. Environmental Excellence Award for New Mark Commons

DD presented the Community Outreach Working Group's recommendation that the Environment Commission bestow an Environmental Excellence Award for Outstanding Leadership in Environmental Practices to the New Mark Commons Community's Urban Forest Management program. Their program can serve as a role model for other communities interested in restoring and expanding their urban tree canopy.

KD moves that the Environment Commission award New Mark Commons with an EEA for Outstanding Leadership in Environmental Practices, and recommend that the Mayor & Council present them their award. BK seconds the motion. Unanimous approval.

FK mentioned that she would like to get this as well as past winners up on the web in a series of vignettes, so that other communities could easily find the information and learn how to apply the successes of past EEA winners to their own projects / activities.

NW to get this placed on a February Mayor & Council agenda, and into the March issue of Rockville Reports.

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6. Science Day 2009 (April 26th)

FK said that Science Day is fast approaching, and the Commission should start making plans. In terms of booth location, the Commission should specifically request to be located away from the somewhat overlapping Montgomery County booth, if they plan to have an energy theme this year.

NW to coordinate with Montgomery County on their Science Day booth topics.

BK mentioned that she could create a graphical display of the results of her home energy audit for the booth. The EC should have a handout showing all energy auditors registered through the MD Home performance with ENERGY STAR program to give to residents.

FK asked if the Commission wanted to give out CFLs again this year – they always seem to be a big hit. NW mentioned that there was funding in the EC's budget specifically for this purpose, but that if the EC started now, they may be able to get CFL donations from Home Depot, IKEA, Lowes, maybe Whole Foods?

SA to look in to donations from these various groups. NW mentioned that typically they require a letter on City letterhead requesting the donation. NW can supply SA with the letterhead, and possibly supply the letter that was used to request last year's donations.

FK mentioned that if we are giving out CFLs, we also want to have handouts on information regarding both Rockville's and Montgomery County's policies on used CFL collection. Could have information about the "mercury issue", and compare amount of mercury in the CFL vs energy savings of burning more coal with an incandescent bulb.

KD asked about the possibility of a rain barrel demo, perhaps tying it in to Rockville's new RainScapes program. NW to check with Heather Gewandter, who is leading that effort.

SA wondered if MCPSD may do a solar demonstration, since several new school buildings have incorporated solar panels, such as Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville.

7. Working Group Updates

Watershed Protection Group

KD explained that the Watershed Protection group was modeling their stream monitoring after West Virginia's Save our Streams (SOS) program, and that they were coming up with a Rockville Stream Monitoring Procedures handbook. This handbook will be shared with the Commission once it has been put into a more complete draft.

High Performance Buildings Group

Will be meeting in January 27th – no immediate updates.

Community Outreach Group

DD said that basically agenda items 2, 5 and 6 were what the Community Outreach group has been working on lately – no further updates. Their next meeting will be the 4th Wed. of the month, January 28th.

8. Staff Updates

NW passed out the schedule for the 2009 Environment Commission meetings. All meetings are scheduled for the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm, with the exception of September 2009 – due to the timing of Labor Day, the Commission will be meeting the third Tuesday of September. All of these dates are on the Commission's website:

<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/government/commissions/ec/>

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NW shared the Environmental Management Division's calendar of Earth Day and related events – EMD is trying to put together a calendar of events for March and April, and are requesting any Commission activities. It was pointed out that Science Day was not currently on the calendar, and it was added. In addition, several of the Watershed Protection working group's stream monitoring training events were added. Any additional events should be sent to NW for inclusion.

NW also called the EC's attention to the results of Montgomery County's Sustainability Working Group: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/deptmpl.asp?url=/content/dep/Sustainability/Committees.asp>

These groups have come up with some very interesting recommendations for sustainability, particularly as it relates to climate protection, that the Commission may wish to review.

NOTE: Since the meeting, Montgomery County's official Climate Protection Plan has been released, detailing the top recommendations of each of the groups. That document can be found here: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/dep/Sustainability/2009mococlimprotplan.pdf>

9. Discussion of Commission Vacancy

The Commission met in closed session to discuss filling the vacancy. After considering the candidates, DD moved that the Commission recommend that the Mayor & Council appoint Christine Davidson-McCord to fill the vacated seat. BK seconds. Unanimous vote in favor of recommending Christine Davidson-McCord for the vacancy.

Before the vote, MC mentioned that issues had arose that would leave her with little time to devote to the Commission, and that she would likely be stepping down in the near future. The Commission decided that they would be able to fill this second vacancy with the same candidate pool, as there were several strong applicants. All applicants have also been invited to participate in the working groups to gain experience with the Commission.

10. Wrap-Up and Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:28 pm.